

# Mid-market leaders feel the pressure to modernize

How CEOs and CFOs can navigate risk,  
complexity and growth to compete and thrive



## Mid-market CEOs and CFOs find themselves at a milestone moment.

Leaders in mid-market organizations face enterprise-sized demands, including rapidly advancing cyberthreats, escalating IT complexity, rising customer expectations, increasingly distributed workforces and an unrelenting pressure to modernize. But they must manage these demands with leaner teams, tighter budgets and often less internal expertise than most enterprises.

This pressure is reshaping what it means to lead in the mid-market. CEOs and CFOs must address not just financial and operational strategy, but also the essential components of modern digital infrastructure. Despite the hurdles, mid-market business leaders are learning that the right technology partner can help their organizations move faster, work smarter and turn these challenges into sources of competitive strength.



52%

of mid-market business owners identified talent retention or talent shortages as their biggest concern in 2025.<sup>3</sup>

### The changing world of mid-market CEOs and CFOs

In one 2025 report, more than 70% of organizations worldwide noted experiencing an increase in cyber risks.<sup>1</sup> Mid-market firms have proven an especially attractive target. At the same time, cloud adoption is soaring, with public cloud spending projected to hit \$357.6 billion in 2026,<sup>2</sup> driven by generative AI (GenAI) and digital modernization.

The need to both innovate and protect their organization, and do so quickly and with limited resources, leaves CEOs and CFOs in a difficult position as they watch the pace of change continue to escalate. These pressures are compounded by persistent talent constraints, prompting many firms to cite limited or insufficient internal expertise — particularly in cybersecurity and other specialized IT domains — as a primary barrier to their modernization. Leaders must think differently if they hope to remain competitive.

### CEOs: Focusing on growth and future readiness

Mid-market CEOs and business owners are laser-focused on preparing the organization for long-term success. Getting there requires technology that accelerates innovation, strengthens resilience and keeps the business ahead of constant change.

### Advance the brand through customer experience and innovation

Digital interactions increasingly define mid-market customer loyalty, leading CEOs to view seamless online experiences as essential to their organizations' growth. Everything from the speed of cloud-hosted mid-market business tools to the reliability of virtual customer support depends on a scalable, resilient and high-performance infrastructure.

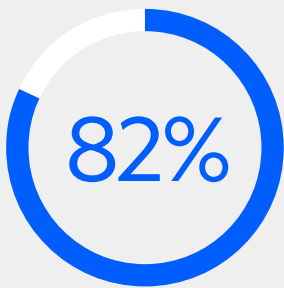
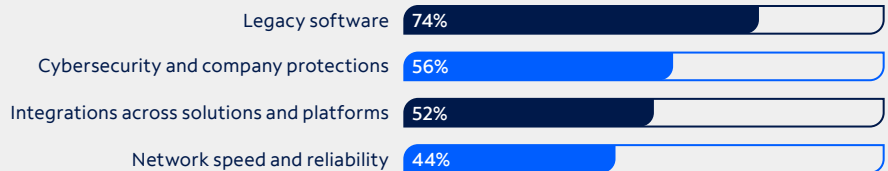
CEOs are looking to cloud platforms to enable them to launch new services faster, adopt AI-driven capabilities and deliver consistent customer experiences across evolving digital touchpoints. Once a differentiating bonus, such innovation is now a competitive necessity, and these leaders want partners that can help them modernize without creating new operational or budgetary burdens.

## Architect for the future — without overextending

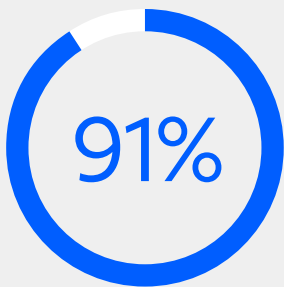
Remaining competitive requires sustained flexibility, scalability and security. Short-term technology fixes often turn into long-term liabilities, creating integration challenges, inconsistent performance and security gaps. As mid-market business cloud services adoption accelerates, mid-market organizations are rapidly expanding their cloud footprints to balance agility, cost and control.

A hybrid cloud approach is becoming the default architecture for many mid-sized companies, offering a practical balance of agility, governance and cost-efficiency. But as operations become more distributed, leaders must manage increasingly complex connectivity, security and performance demands across both cloud and on-premises environments, all while contending with legacy systems that slow progress. At the same time, cloud-related risks such as misconfigurations, unauthorized access, data exposure and compliance gaps continue to rise.

### Top tech support pain points according to mid-market companies:<sup>4</sup>



of mid-market companies carry a cyber insurance policy.<sup>5</sup>



of mid-market companies with a digital skills gap report a noticeable impact on performance.<sup>7</sup>

To address key priorities — including business continuity, compliance with data safeguards and protection from security threats — CEOs are seeking operational models that deliver cloud-ready connectivity, integrated security, networking and managed services under one umbrella. This unified approach helps reduce complexity, control costs and ensure that technology investments keep pace with evolving operational demands and long-term business strategy.

## Build proactive risk management into strategy

Security, reliability and uptime have become board-level priorities as cyber risk accelerates faster than many mid-market teams can respond. A single disruption, whether from ransomware, an outage or a simple misconfiguration, can erode customer trust and derail growth. Mid-market companies often lack robust defenses, making them prime targets for breaches. The stakes are significant: Nearly half of small and medium businesses had experienced a cyberattack as of 2025, and almost one in five closed or filed for bankruptcy as a result.<sup>6</sup>

Modernization efforts are also creating new vulnerabilities, while increasingly sophisticated threats widen existing skills gaps and strain already limited IT resources. Complexity is further compounded when multiple stakeholders are involved, slowing critical technology decisions and delaying needed security investments.

Forward-thinking CEOs are responding by embedding threat prevention, governance, identity protection and vendor management directly into their growth strategies. Managed services have become central to this shift, providing specialized expertise in areas that are hardest to staff internally, such as advanced threat prevention, monitoring and access control.

## CFOs: Prioritizing security and spend

Amid rising threats and growing complexity, mid-market CFOs are sharpening their focus on security, cost control and shrewder technology investments.

### Optimize investment in a high-risk, high-reward environment

CFOs face tremendous pressure to allocate capital wisely while still financing the necessary strategic modernization. For mid-market firms, where every dollar must drive clear ROI, this comes with requirements: Security investments must reduce risk and improve resilience, cloud outlays should enable measurable operational efficiency and connectivity efforts have to support the business's continuity and productivity.

More than ever, security-related line items, including solutions devoted to protecting the organization's cloud, network, software as a service (SaaS) tools and compliance success, dominate mid-market tech priorities. Outages and breaches carry severe financial consequences, and many mid-market firms still lack modern identity and access controls and automation. CFOs now weigh the cost of risk mitigation, including insurance, managed security, business continuity, disaster recovery and upskilling, against the potentially catastrophic cost of failure. For CFOs, risk management has become a central operating expense, helping drive an overall increase in security spending.

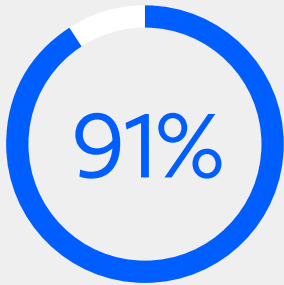
### Reduce total cost of ownership (TCO) and increase predictability

Vendor-related issues rank high on the CFO's list of focus areas. Working with multiple providers can mean separate contracts, billing and security demands, duplicate or overlapping services, integration challenges and unclear accountability.

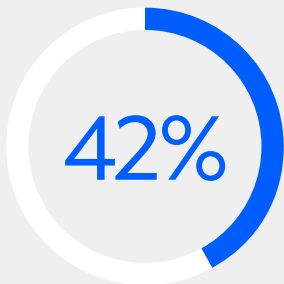
Consolidation reduces TCO by eliminating redundant tools, integrations and support overhead. Working with a single trusted managed services partner means predictable monthly pricing, allowing CFOs to better forecast IT spend while scaling capacity as needed. This shift from capex-heavy purchase cycles to opex-driven managed services aligns with modern financial strategy, which prioritizes lower upfront investment, reduced maintenance costs and greater budgeting stability.

### Manage the financial impact of talent

Many mid-market CFOs cannot justify fully staffed in-house security or digital teams, especially as threats and technical demands grow more specialized. Talent shortages spanning security, digital roles, hybrid-work support and AI-related skills make it even harder to recruit and retain the expertise required to protect and modernize operations. Globally distributed companies face additional pressure, as sourcing capabilities domestically for areas like supply chain and international business remains difficult and costly.



of mid-market leaders expected to increase cybersecurity spending in 2025.<sup>8</sup>



of mid-market companies cite IT staff availability as a top pain point.<sup>9</sup>





## How Spectrum Business® helps mid-market executives convert risk into advantage

Spectrum Business empowers mid-market CEOs and CFOs to resolve complexity with integrated solutions that enhance resilience, support growth and simplify technology management.

### Managed security bridges the cyber skills gap

Spectrum Business provides enterprise-grade managed security services. Our distributed denial of service (DDoS) mitigation, multi-factor authentication (MFA), zero-trust access and advanced threat detection help mid-market firms close security gaps proactively. Organizations gain specialized protection without needing to hire costly cyber teams or scramble after an incident.

### Fast, reliable and secure connectivity supports cloud and hybrid work

High-performance fiber and dedicated internet solutions from Spectrum Business deliver the consistent speed, reliability and security required for hybrid work and multicloud architectures. The performance experienced by mid-market organizations is backed by industry-leading service-level agreements (SLAs), ensuring uptime that directly supports a modern customer experience, the transition to a cloud-first world and the organization's bottom line.

### Built-in resiliency with backup, recovery and continuity

Business continuity and disaster recovery services safeguard operations, data and customer experience reliability during disruptions. Our solutions and services help mid-market firms protect their revenue streams and maintain brand credibility — even in crisis conditions.

### Financial simplicity through consolidation and predictable pricing

By unifying connectivity, security, collaboration and continuity under a single provider, Spectrum Business helps mid-market organizations reduce vendor complexity and control integration costs. Fixed monthly pricing improves budget predictability, a top priority for CFOs adapting to volatile markets.

### Strategic infrastructure that scales with the business

Whether firms are expanding to new locations, adopting new cloud workloads or strengthening cybersecurity, Spectrum Business solutions are architected to evolve with organizational growth. Mid-market firms gain the stability and responsiveness required for modern operations via 100% US-based support, available 24/7.



Spectrum Business is a Cisco Gold Partner and the Cisco Service Provider Partner of the Year for the Americas, recognition that reflects our deep technical expertise and exceptional service.

## Turning today's obstacles into tomorrow's mid-market growth

Mid-market organizations are contending with complex challenges. Leaders who treat technology as a strategic investment — rather than a cost center — are turning those headwinds into sustained momentum. Bringing a broad portfolio of managed services and solutions, Spectrum Business helps mid-market CEOs and CFOs modernize their connectivity, close cybersecurity gaps and deploy scalable, resilient infrastructure that strengthens financial discipline and the customer experience. We help organizations align the right technology foundation with their strategic business goals, transforming risk into advantage and accelerating growth in 2026 and beyond.

[Learn more](#)

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3. ["2025 Middle Market Survey: Evolution, Optimism, and Uncertainty,"](#) UHY, 2025.
4. ["Cybersecurity & IT for Midmarket Companies: The Rise of Strategic Outsourcing,"](#) IHL Group, 2024.
5. ["Companies Must Remain Diligent as Cybersecurity Threats Evolve,"](#) RSM US, April 17, 2025.
6. Johan Gerber and Jane Prokop, ["Too Small to Be Ignored? Not Anymore. Why Shoring Up Cyber Defenses for Small Businesses Is Crucial,"](#) Mastercard, March 27, 2025.
7. ["Mid-Year 2024 Middle Market Indicator,"](#) National Center for the Middle Market, 2024.
8. ["Companies Must Remain Diligent as Cybersecurity Threats Evolve."](#)
9. ["Cybersecurity & IT for Midmarket Companies."](#)

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